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ABSTRACT

This publication about moral education is a conversation between a university professor of religion and the chairman of a high school social studies department. As part of the National Humanities Faculty Why Series, the book is intended to help students, teachers, and citizens maintain and improve their intellectual vigor and human awareness and to help them reflect on the purpose, methods, and usefulness of a wide range of human endeavors. This conversation provides an analysis of the challenge and opportunity facing schools as they provide moral education for society. The task of moral education cannot be defined simply as a task of teaching old values or as one of clarifying existing values. If moral choice suggests that there is a potential for shaping the future or determining one's own future, then moral education must somehow grapple with both ends and means and with the realities of life in the present. Moral education is meaningful only when it is pursued in a dialectic with science, politics, art, religion, and the other human pursuits. The wide ranging discussion touches on curricula, the role of the teacher as moral agent, and the structure of educational institutions. Also included is a bibliographical note that cites moral education resource materials of interest to teachers and students. (Author/RM)

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WHY CHOOSE?

A CONVERSATION ABOUT MORAL EDUCATION WITH HARRY F. BOOTH CONDUCTED BY RONALD W. MILLER

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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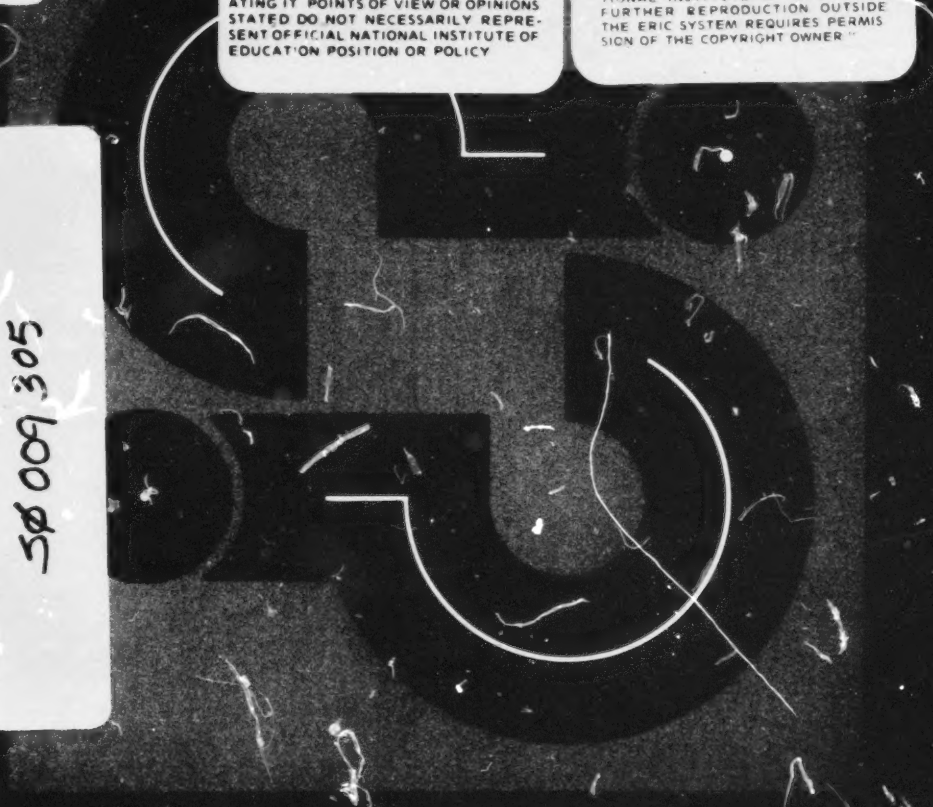

The National Humanities Faculty Why Series

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Why Read & Write?	Harry Berger, Jr., and Louis E. Haga
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Why Draw?	Donald L. Weismann and Joseph F. Wheeler
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Why Sing?	Wendell Whalum and David Day
Why Choose?	Harry F. Booth and Ronald W. Miller
Why Reason?	Edwin J. Delattre and Thomas J. Donovan

Foreword to the Series

This conversation bears a simple title: *Why Choose?* Yet taken together, this and the other conversations in this series illuminate one overriding question: What does it mean to be human?

Of course there are no final answers to that question, yet there are hard-won understandings and insights available to us from many sources, past and present. We all too often fail even to ask the question. Thus we ignore the help available and fail to become more human, more compassionate, more decent than we are.

At a time when our problems are so many – racism, poverty, pollution, crime, overpopulation, to name a few – we hold that all who care about education are compelled to reexamine what is taught and why. We believe that the problems will not be solved without getting at the larger question underneath them: What does it mean to be human?

The NHF WHY SERIES, then, reflects the concern of the National Humanities Faculty for the full range of humanistic questions. These questions involve but are not limited to the subjects in the curriculum that traditionally comprise the humanities: English, social studies, music, art, and the like. Indeed, they embrace the purpose of education itself.

In this series, the titles range from *Why Belong?* (human culture) and *Why Remember?* (history) to *Why Pretend?* (drama) and *Why Sing?* (music). Each presents a transcribed conversation between two people – one an authority in the study or practice of a particular branch of the humanities, the other a person experienced in the hard realities of today's schools. In these informal yet searching dialogues, the conversationalists are rooting out fundamental questions and equally fundamental answers not often shared with students of any age. They are the vital but often unspoken assumptions of the delicate tapestry we call civilization.

These conversations are designed for the learner who inhabits us all – not only the student but the teacher, administrator, parent, and concerned layman. We hope they will offer new insights into our inescapable humanity.

A. D. Richardson, III
Director
National Humanities Faculty

THE NATIONAL HUMANITIES FACULTY WHY SERIES

WHY CHOOSE?

a conversation about moral education with

Harry F. Booth

conducted by

Ronald W. Miller

Chandler & Sharp Publishers, Inc.
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About The National Humanities Faculty

The NHF provides outstanding humanists from the world of the humanities, arts, and sciences as consultants to schools. The program was founded by Phi Beta Kappa, the American Council on Education, and the American Council of Learned Societies under grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (although the findings, conclusions, etc., do not necessarily represent the view of the Endowment) and various independent foundations. Inquiries are invited: The National Humanities Faculty, 1266 Main Street, Concord, Massachusetts 01742.

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Introduction to the Conversation

Dilemmas of choice permeate every facet of our experience, from how we spend our current income to the policies we support in schools, government, and industry. Every choice, moreover, is shot through with preferences for one value or another – economic values, intellectual values, moral values, and so on. The dilemma for all of us is how we are to determine a basis for sorting out the claims of these competing values and choose. Moral education is an enterprise that undertakes to reflect upon the dilemmas of moral choice and, it is hoped, to equip the individual with greater competence in making wise and responsible decisions.

This conversation, which examines some of these issues, is with a man who is an ethicist, theologian, and student of contemporary culture. Harry E. Booth is Charles A. Dana Professor of Religion at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a member of the Commission on Liberal Learning of the Association of American Colleges, and a member of the National Humanities Faculty. Twice cited for outstanding teaching at Dickinson, Professor Booth has long been concerned with the religious significance of contemporary literature, music, and art and with the moral and religious issues of our society. His current concerns derive in no small measure from his early interest in the theological ethics of Frederick Denison Maurice, the noted nineteenth-century English Christian Socialist, who consistently held fast to the conviction that the conversion of mankind was a universal and present divine possibility. Professor Booth has sought in his teaching for over a decade and a half to illuminate this dynamic relationship between religion and culture and of the existential dilemmas inherent in choosing for oneself within a culture characterized by conflicting voices, claims, and norms for action.

One of the most pervasive characteristics of our time is the breakdown of public confidence in almost every social institution – churches, the family, government, the press, the military, business and industry, and schools and colleges. Many perceptive observers attribute this deterioration to a growing disparity between the set of traditional beliefs that have guided our society –

our social ideology, if you will – on the one hand, and the conditions of the real world, on the other. Lacking clarity about the substantive meaning of universally held and timeless values, such as justice, equity, and freedom, our institutions tend to perpetuate values that no longer speak to the conditions of the world. It is in this context, as Professor Booth points out, that education is being asked to provide moral education for society. The vastness and difficulty of the task are readily apparent.

The task of moral education cannot be defined simply as a task of teaching the old values or as one of clarifying existing values. If moral choice suggests that there is a potentiality for shaping the future or determining one's own future, then moral education must somehow grapple with the issue of both ends and means and with the realities of life in the present. Moral education, therefore, is never an enterprise which is self-contained; rather, it is meaningful only when it is pursued in a dialectic with science, politics, art, religion, and the other human pursuits. Recent studies concerned with the limits of growth in our world provide eloquent testimony to this fact.

Professor Booth, in his wide-ranging discussion, touches on a number of other facets of the enterprise, among them the curriculum, the role of the teacher as moral agent, the structure of educational institutions, but, true to his profound understanding of human existence, he notes that there are human limits to one's moral obligation and to one's capacity to determine the outcome of human events. Indeed, religion or faith may be the only sure basis on which one can have both the courage to choose and the humility to resist moral self-righteousness and absolutism.

The conversation that follows is a helpful analysis of the challenge and opportunity facing the schools, and it makes a persuasive case for taking up the challenge with a sense of humility and proportion. The development of humane persons who are both "freely moral" and "morally free" is an educational objective worthy of our earnest effort. Ronald W. Miller, the other person engaged in this dialogue, has been grappling with such problems in our schools for over twenty years. Now chairman of the social studies department in the Oakland (California) High School, he has given these issues special attention as he has developed and implemented courses in ethnic studies, economics, comparative civilizations, sociology, and the humanities.

Association of American Colleges — Samuel H. Magill

WHY CHOOSE?

MILLER Harry, to some extent our public schools are a microcosm of our pluralistic society and reflect, therefore, the directions or nondirections of our society. Books that have been very popular or controversial are a concern of parents, curriculum is a concern, student attitudes are concerns. So the question really is, why has moral education become such a paramount part of subject matter in schools today?

BOOTH There are a couple of things that can be said. One is that we're all under an enormous barrage of pressures and invitations: the way our society is organized, especially its increasing urbanization; the advertising to which we are subjected in all forms of the media; information about the way in which other people live, which in an earlier time we might not have had; insights into the lives of people who have power and wealth. All these pressures draw us away from what seems to have been, in retrospect, a simpler life.

Now, in the midst of all of that barrage, and perhaps as a result of it, the organs of society which normally took the responsibility for moral education, particularly the church and the family, have in a sense . . . perhaps it's unfair to say they've broken down, but their ability to perform this function has at least been diminished by the fact that there are so many other kinds of pressures with moral significance, moral consequence, brought to bear upon us. Well, in this setting, another institution is viewed by many people in society as an appropriate one to assume that function because it is not private like the family and not voluntary like the denominational church, but is a public institution -- the schools. They're being asked to bear the very great responsibility of maintaining some kind of coherence in the way in which young people grow and the way in which their attitudes are formed.

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MILLER Do you feel that the church and the family have actually relinquished, to some extent, responsibility for moral education?

BOOTH In some respects, yes, though I'm not sure the relinquishment has been a glad relinquishment. But the family and the church, like the individual, have felt somewhat overwhelmed by the influx of stimuli over which they have no control, because, again, they are private and voluntary organizations.

MILLER You also mentioned our increasing urbanization. Would you say that the social structure in which many of the responsibilities that formerly belonged to the family now belong to agencies and institutions developed by society has contributed to this relinquishment?

BOOTH One facet of urbanization that I find significant here is the rise of bureaucracy, the rise of public agencies to accomplish what fraternal and familial organizations used to accomplish. I think there's another aspect of urbanization which is influential here, and that is that the city (and in our history particularly the seaboard city) has historically been the agency of transition, of movement, of cultural change. The sense of cultural instability is more profound in commercial, which is now to say urban, centers than it is in older agricultural or small-town settings.

And it's precisely in a time of flux that people who are called to be wanderers, but aren't very comfortable being wanderers, look to some counteragency or other for a reassertion of the verities, a reassertion of stability. I think the schools are being asked, because of the cultural insecurity of our times, to do something that everybody feels is important: maintain a central core of understanding of what it is to be human.

MILLER This is an awesome responsibility, of course, for the schools, asking them to develop, within their curriculum, moral values, moral education, in a society that's become rootless.

BOOTH Yes, asking them to express for society values which society itself no longer has. We're not only wanderers as individuals, a nation of strangers to one another, but we have also become a wandering nation, and Western culture has to some extent become a wandering culture. That is to say, the whole ethos of our society is felt to be adrift.

MILLER If we add to this sense of drifting, this wandering, the changes in the actual landscape taking place almost overnight, we've reinforced this feeling of rootlessness and vagueness about where we're going, what we're doing, and why.

BOOTH Yes, I think these things clearly reinforce each other and belong together. There's probably a close relationship between the technological and structural changes on the one hand and attitudinal level on the other. We feel bereft of any consensus about priorities, while at the same time, in terms of the actual physical context and environment in which we live, we are also subjected to very vast and very swift changes.

Now, I must say that all this brings a challenge to education. Let me suggest, though, that the challenge it brings to education is not just to the public schools, but to the educational processes of the entire society. I would argue that family, church, media, politics, economic structure, advertising, commercial relationships, ways in which we move around, what we see in our environment, landscape, all these are character-forming. All these are attitude-forming and attitude-expressing. So education, it seems to me, is a process in which the whole culture is involved and not just the schools.

MILLER I would certainly agree. Education is not the two sides of the page or the four walls of the classroom, but is in fact an ongoing challenge. And I think that this challenge is being met. I find more and more teachers who are going from the classroom into society, whether in a figurative sense or in a literal sense, and developing a consciousness among their students of the problems of humanity, of everyday dealings with life, and how they relate directly to what they're teaching.

BOOTH The more that becomes conscious and explicit, the better off we'll be. But not just on the part of teachers, also on the part of political figures, economic figures, the leadership culture, if you will, in every aspect of our lives. The more they become conscious of the fact that everything that they engage in and mold, everything that happens in society, influences the attitudes and character and expectations and behavior of the young people, the better off we are.

One of the peculiarities of human nature is that it's not exhaustively given in the genes, it's not even finished when it comes to biological maturity. Human beings come into the world unfinished, and they live in the world unfinished. Culture adds to nature certain stimuli which contribute to the process of the constant finishing – or, if you will, the constant becoming – of the human being. In that respect, every society, whether it knows it or not, is in the process of human formation in all of its activities, and not just in compartmentalized "Education."

We're really talking about what it is that we think in our culture and in our society ought to be the image of our humanity. The ancient Greeks were extraordinarily aware of this, and their notion of virtue, to which the whole of their culture was presumably attuned, was the notion not just of producing certain kinds of behavioral responses, but of producing the kind of Greek who would embody their ideals of culture and society as a high achievement of humanity. We've been so busy conquering the physical world and tailoring our other behaviors to contribute to that mastery of the physical world that we've set aside the older and equally noble task of thinking of man as a whole, and of thinking of man in society as a whole, and of thinking of the total impact of all of our societal activities, all of our cultural activities, upon the coming of a young person to a culturally affirmed image of humanity.

MILLER So you're saying actually that to some extent the pursuit of excellence, *arete*, the pursuit of the development of this ideal, whole man, was a curriculum of the Greeks, and that, to some extent, in our own education, we have compartmentalized the curriculum and, in so doing, compartmentalized ourselves.

BOOTH Not only within the schools, but between the schools and society. I think it's very unfair for society, if it feels that the implicit education that students get from society produces the embodiment of a negative ideal, to unload upon the schools a request that the schools somehow undo it all, and then to become upset when the schools find it difficult to persuade their students that life is integrated and whole. This is a more basic and more difficult division: between a society which operates on certain sets of goals and apparent values and rewards, and the request of that society that its higher ideals somehow be achieved in a segregated institution.

MILLER Well, no wonder then that those of us who try the interdisciplinary approach in the schools have an extremely difficult time. It's not simply, as you say, the school, but our whole society that is interdisciplined. Our whole behavior pattern, to some extent, is interdisciplined, whether we re in our role in business, our role as a father, a church deacon, and so on.

BOOTH By the way, I'm not saying that if the schools are unfairly put upon by society, the schools' response should be "we wash our hands of it because this is an unfair burden to put upon us." I think that, while the schools do try and should try to bear their share of the excitement and burden of moral education, they -- and school people in their other roles --

should not let society rest comfortably with the apparent abdication to the schools of this responsibility for moral education. It is possible, at one and the same time, to be responsible within society, and still be critical of certain failures within society. I think the schools have to be both.

MILLER You're asking for a degree of leadership on the part of schools, educators, teachers, a leadership that is, again, an extremely serious one, and a very awesome responsibility.

BOOTH Yes, that's right.

MILLER Well, certainly there's been a trend toward emphasis on moral education recently, especially the value-clarification programs, which have been developed for both faculty and students. And I find this a very serious task, but right now I'm highly critical of what's being done.

BOOTH Well, clearly the old way doesn't work any longer. In my children's school, the technique is still listing on the wall a series of disparate virtues and assuming that if the children will learn conceptually what these virtues are, this kind of purely conceptual learning will in fact manifest itself in attitudes and behavior. When our roles were relatively stable, and the child followed the parents, and the class structure and function were relatively stable, then these various virtues had referents which were clear. But in a society in flux, words like "loyalty" and "obedience" have variable referents.

MILLER In other words, the young person today doesn't understand how it would fit his needs, for example, to be obedient.

BOOTH It may work for a third- and a fourth-grader in class. But by the time that young person becomes a seventh- or a ninth-grader, he sees enough turmoil in the structures of his society, both near to him and far away from him, to know that life is not nearly so stable as may have been suggested in his first, second, or third grade by the way in which that classroom was organized and the way in which those virtues were neatly listed.

MILLER Well, the attempt to meet this problem on the high school level doesn't seem to me to be much more satisfactory. But the people involved do see a need for re-examining old values and approaches in the light of twentieth-century technology and science and the mechanism of our society. One pedagogical answer is the whole process of value clarification I mentioned before. My experiences here are twofold.

One is that of a faculty deciding to discuss their values in terms of teaching as a profession or in terms of their own personal life. Usually, the students

take off in the afternoon, and the faculty gets together with a facilitator to discuss the whole concept of values, always with an underlying current within the discussion that there really are certain values that are far more important than others – it almost goes back to your illustration of the values on the wall.

And then we have the other aspect of the new moral education, and that is the teacher, knowing its importance, having discussions in class with the students regarding their values, and of course allowing the students to present what they consider to be their values, each student presenting values which often are in conflict with the values of other students. Nevertheless, there's always a sort of tolerant, almost obsequious attitude in the classroom toward anything put forth, so that after what may be a stimulating conversation the entire process tails off into a dead end.

BOOTH What's missing in both cases is a joined dialogue. In the one case you have a facilitator apparently imposing a priorities scale . . .

MILLER But always saying he's not imposing.

BOOTH . . . while, in the other case, you have the admissibility of all values, as it were.

Well, I think there's nothing invincibly bad about this as a start. Awareness, self-awareness, making explicit attitudes and convictions and values that were implicit is very important. So far, I think, so good. Human beings are characteristically subjective. We don't experience things like billiard balls, simply as the bumping up of exteriority against exteriority. When we're bumped, or when we bump, there is an interior dimension to it; there's an experience of pleasure or pain, of joy or sadness, a positive or a negative flash, an affective ingredient in human experience. We care for things. That care can be anxiety, as in "You are a great care to me," which the mother says to the wayward child. Or that care can be very positive and desiring as when the swain says to his beloved, "I care for you." We are incurably "carers," and in this sense, the clarification of what it is that we care about is a very important thing.

But it's also inadequate. We're not only subjective; we're also embodied agents of behavior in the world. What we do affects other than our present-experiencing, self-aware selves. We affect the world. We affect the world in space, we affect the world in time, and above all we affect other people, who are themselves subjective, as we are. That is to say, what I do is of moment to other human beings, and what they do is of moment to me. There is something exterior about us as well as something interior. That means, to the

extent to which our behavior is related at all to our values, to that extent our values, or at least the values by which we rationalize our behavior, will have an impact upon other human beings, and therefore they are in some sense subject to public scrutiny. They're subject to criticized choice. We are, if I may say it this way, moral agents.

We are moral agents because, in time and space, we act in response to stimuli, bending some of those stimuli. We are the agents of actions that make a difference. We have, if you will, power in our hands. Power is not something that belongs just to the mighty. It belongs, in its own way, to every human being who ever engaged in any kind of behavior that related him to any other human being in such a way that that human being was affected, either now or tomorrow or the next day.

I think, for example, of Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye*, who wants desperately not to have power. He wants desperately to live by himself, to have a private life, to have no galleries, to keep his goals secret, so that his life isn't sullied by anybody else, and so he's not tempted to use it as a weapon against anybody else. Well, when Holden Caulfield sets out, toward the end of the book, to enact his privacy, he suddenly discovers Phoebe, his small sister, beside him with her suitcase, saying, "I'm going with you." Holden, for the first time in the book, gets really angry at Phoebe and tells her to shut up, and they separate and walk on different sides of the street.

I think that what's involved there, and it's the crux of the book, is that Holden is realizing that even before he became self-conscious enough to have the value of privacy as a priority value, he was already so deeply involved with a person for whom he cares that it is impossible for him to enact even the most private of lives without affecting, hurtfully, somebody else. He cannot leave Phoebe's life without hurting her. Even retirement into subjectivity is an enactment of something which makes a difference in somebody else's life.

Now, it seems to me that because we are, even in this most withdrawn sense, agents, the question of moral evaluation arises. Even here it's necessary for us to ask: In what way am I enhancing my own and others' well-being – not just being, but well-being – since I can affect it one way or another way? And a related question: In what sense, therefore, is my doing a well-doing or an ill-doing? Those questions call for inquiry, constant inquiry into the structure of human experience as moral experience. In the course of that inquiry,

we try the best we can to discern what is most beneficial or least beneficial and by the criteria of what notions of human existence. Then we make the moral choice.

MILLER Most people would think of human beings as agents of power in terms of behavior patterns of "doing." But you say there are also behavior patterns of "not-doing"?

BOOTH It's difficult to not-do. It's perhaps impossible to not-do. In one sense, the voter who stays away from the polls doesn't succeed in not-doing, he simply succeeds in lowering the number of votes cast. Closer to home, perhaps, there's the person who sits and doesn't-do relative to another person, ignores him, communicates the most person threatening kind of attitude. Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is a victim of such not-doing; as his wife put it, "Somebody must take account of this man." There's a sense in which attitudinal not-doing is extraordinarily cruel, and extraordinarily effective in producing a certain kind of personality and a certain kind of character in the person with whom you're communicating.

MILLER I think this is extremely important in relation to the classroom, to the teacher and the students. Student not-doing, which is really doing, has to be clearly understood by the teacher. And the teacher's not-doing some specific thing is something which the student should understand as well. There's a tendency on both sides to ignore extremely negative attitudes, to ignore not-doing.

BOOTH There are probably times and places and modes of taking account of certain situations, and it may be that this moment in this setting is not the time to take immediate account of somebody's behavior or attitude in class. But to overlook it entirely and permanently is, I think, the temptation and nonmoral – no, it's immoral – quiescence or passivity.

Let me suggest in a summary way some notions that are implicit in the idea of a moral agent. Let me try to say three things: First, human value-behavior (which I think all behavior is) is characterized by intentionality. Because we are evaluative beings, and because our behavior makes a difference in the world, our behavior's really not just behavior, but implicitly it's action. By action I mean, for the moment, behavior with an intention, directed behavior, behavior aimed at some end, some objective. Our behavior (unless it's purely conditioned response) is action because it carries within itself an expression of our values and our desires and our wills as an embodied intent.

That's why value clarification is useful but not adequate in moral education. Because behavior is embodied intention.

Second, thinking of ourselves as moral agents presupposes a partial indeterminacy in life, in the world. There are gaps in life which can be filled in one way or another way, depending on our intentionality, our courage, our will, our behavior -- what I've been calling our "action" as moral agents. To have the notion of a moral agent make sense, we must assume a gap in which it's possible to say: Not only by intention I will, but by power I can, do one thing rather than another thing, embody this intention rather than another intention. Moral evaluation, moral choice, presupposes in the nature of man and his relation to the universe some interstices or gaps of indeterminacy.

Third, in the extension of our intentionality into the yet undetermined future, with some power we become aware of and accept a demand arising out of the total situation. It's not a simple, uncompounded, neat demand, but one which sets us, our talents and powers, the actual circumstances of the moment and the context, and the possibilities for action, all under the aspect of a latent and complex fitness which calls us to enact and fulfill its promise. Thus, to think of ourselves as moral agents is to think of ourselves under a self-affirmed duress to choose, in some way defensibly more rightly than wrongly, and not simply to pick by fancy among value-neutral options.

MILLER I suppose the natural question for the teacher or student to ask next is something like "How do I go about making a moral evaluation? What are my resources? Are there any guidelines for the process? How do I really make a mature choice?"

BOOTH All right, we've been talking in some sense descriptively about the situation of moral evaluation as it involves the nature of the self as an agent. Now you are asking me a question about the sources from which might be derived some guiding principles, so that this situation has a little more concreteness to it.

First of all, I think we have to eliminate the notion of the spontaneous, or the inclinational, or the I-like-vanilla-better-than-chocolate approach to moral principles. I don't think that we get moral guidance (although we may sometimes get behavioral guidance) from what we may be in the mood to do or in the mood to be.

MILLER But not sustaining guidance. That's only temporary.

BOOTH Not only is it only temporary, but it doesn't subject itself to com-

parison, and therefore to criticism, relative to other possibilities. It simply happens. It's like talking about behavior as an occurrence rather than action as a deliberated event. And I don't think that life, moral life certainly, is made up of occurrences or happenings. The actions of moral life are made up of events which are chosen, deliberately evaluated, riskily undertaken, with consequences not all of which we're totally aware of, but some of which we have predicted and opted for. We have made a choice, not just had an inclination.

Well, all right. In spite of what we've said about society in flux, the fact remains that *one* of the sources of guiding principles is the tradition of the culture of which we are a part. Now that means constant reference to history. It means care for various levels and acuities of transmission of that tradition. A member of a particular family might get it in a slightly different version, or get it less explicitly or less profoundly, than somebody in another family or peer group or school setting would get it. Nevertheless, at base, there's inquiry into a common inheritance.

MILLER What would be an example? Perhaps, in our traditional history, the concept of opportunity? First, the opportunity of coming to this great land, then of the West, and then, as the West filled up, other areas of opportunity?

BOOTH Yes, that would be an example. And I would pursue it even further, in fact, and say that the notion of opportunity is not only something in the tradition of America as the "New World." In the Western tradition, all the way from biblical times, an open history has been where man really plays out his nature and his destiny. We determine, within a community, our loyalty and creativity in terms of how we use the future. The notion of the lure of a promised land is a temporal as well as a spatial notion, and a personal and communal notion.

The possibility of our being capable of formulating and reformulating and modifying – or preserving or altering – what it is that the world has become, as we make it into the world that is to be, is something which is part of a very, very deep inheritance. Now, how much of that do black Americans get from a family whose remembrances go back, not to a voluntary response to a beckoning future, but to an involuntary service in the building of somebody else's future? This, in spite of the schools and the fact that they are now American citizens and presumably have equality of opportunity and so on.

All of us are conditioned with such a host of variables that the clarity and depth with which we inherit that culture differs. Yet there must be much to be retrieved and transfigured as common in our culture – I think that's why we call it "a culture" rather than simply a melange or a potpourri. Our culture or past or inheritance or tradition or something like that is one of the sources of principles that affect moral evaluation, moral choice.

There is a *second* principle – to give it a secular term, intuition, or to give it a theological term, revelation. That is to say, in some sense not from conditioning and culture, but in a way unbeknownst and understood by us, guidance comes intrusively into our awareness and we say we are "overcome," or we have "seen," or we are "convicted" – meaning we are convinced – not by what we have, what we can think of ourselves as heirs and custodians of, but because somehow from quite outside our normal experience has come an imperative or a set of imperatives which we are laid under duress to respond to.

MILLER An example?

BOOTH Well, those who take the Exodus and the Wandering in the Wilderness with considerable literalness will say that the Ten Commandments constitute the content of a revelation which came from outside and which was laid on the people who became Israel. And I suppose one could say the same kind of thing about an injunction from the Sermon on the Mount, if one is being a literal, convicted Christian. Or, I suppose, if one has a dream, and in that dream one is visited by – what, an angel, which is to say a messenger, whether it's construed as a messenger from some other kind of beyondness or as an intuition from within the subconscious? In either case, experientially, it would seem that one could say, "I received a message from an angel in a dream last night, calling me to go to Salt Lake City, and I will therefore . . ."

MILLER Would this revelation be part of Jung's concept of the collective unconscious?

BOOTH It can be interpreted that way, yes, that is a way of trying to render comprehensible to the human mind something which is experienced as coming from outside our normal consciousness and comprehension.

Then I think there's a *third* possible source of these principles. Culture and conditioning is certainly one – tradition, inheritance, custom. Revelation or intuition is another. In addition, it's possible to say that somehow, built into the structure of our natures, there is a certain set of commitments that must

be obeyed in order for us simply to be ourselves, to be true to ourselves. Certain patterns of behavior, certain values, are more appropriate than others. In fact, others would be destructive of the structures of our own being. People who say that one can derive moral principles through reason alone are, I think, saying some variant of this, namely, that by the application of reason to the very structures and presuppositions of our existence, we will discover not what we are called upon to do, because that is a metaphor derived from one of these other sources, but what it is that we simply ought to do.

Harlow Shapley, an astronomer, normally thought about man as being, as he put it, "peripheral," ours being a small planet of a small sun in a small galaxy out on the edge of things, "and ephemeral," here today and gone tomorrow, practically instantaneous in the time of the universe. Shapley was nevertheless involved in very many causes, political and social, and he was asked what it is that makes somebody who believes that man is peripheral and ephemeral engage in causes as though they were important, since in the long range and the wide span of things, they seem so insignificant. Shapley's answer was "I am just playing the game."

That is to say, man is of a particular sort of embodied energy in this universe, and that sort of embodied energy is characterized by increasing levels of organization of that energy. This is not necessarily limited to the human organism as a single body, but extends to the collectivity of society, so that for me to engage in certain causes which would intensify the interrelatedness of the society is for me to play the game of my body, writ large – indeed, it is simply for me to play the game of the universe. Now, I'm not talking about God, and I'm not talking about freedom and spontaneity; I'm not even talking about culture. I'm talking about what I read, rationally, from looking at what I observe about the universe and what I observe about myself. I think Shapley's an example of somebody who has tried to derive his moral behavior from what he construes to be our nature.

MILLER And if our nature were not that, we would be something else, and we wouldn't be sitting here talking about it.

BOOTH Certainly linguistic and other forms of communication and efforts to clarify our thinking are part of "playing the game."

MILLER People go through a lot of pain to "play the game," to use reason.

BOOTH Yes, any moral evaluation is very difficult. I think we are where we are precisely because our predecessors didn't avoid that risk and that pain.

All right. Now we have three sources for the principles that guide moral evaluation: culture or tradition, revelation or intuition, and reason. I must say that I myself think that given some knowledge of these sources, it's not absolutely crucial that we pin down the particular source by which we, as moral agents, seek to guide our evaluation of the predicament in a given situation. It's not quite so important what we think to be the source as it is important that we see the principles derived therefrom, and see those principles constantly under experiential and rational critique as our sense of ourselves and our sense of our circumstances change. It's also important to continue in communication with other people and thus enlarge the scope of our imagination, so that we are able to picture even more futures, more future options, than we would be able to do by ourselves.

It seems to me that moral evaluation is a process which is never ending, and what's crucial is constantly to hold these principles in review by playing them and our experience against each other. By "against," now, I don't mean in a hostile and negative sense, but in a dynamic-equilibrium sense, in a harmonic sense, in which one pulls the string ends tight in order to get sounds out of them – playing them constantly against each other and, as candidly and as openly as we can, against what we actually seem to experience in our day-by-day lives.

It seems to me that moral evaluation is composed of a kind of reverence for the substance of the inherited, or revealed, or rational tradition and, at the same time, the application of constant critical assessment to the substance of those traditions. Without the substance, there would be nothing to criticize, and you can't build anything out of criticism alone. On the other hand, without the criticism, the substance would become mute, would no longer speak because it was no longer challenged to speak. In either case, you don't have moral evaluation. Moral evaluation occurs at points of tension.

I think it's not inappropriate at this point to say, in connection with the question of human nature and tension, that, among the theoretical options of basically good, basically evil, neither-good-nor-evil, both-good-and-evil, the West has always conceived of man as being both good and evil. There's a conflict situation built into Western man's conception of himself. Conflict is the rule of life, and it's out of conflict and in conflict and through conflict that one emerges as a morally mature human being in a more mature culture.

MILLER The whole tradition of right and wrong, the conflict of good and evil within us, has developed a dichotomy, a dualism.

BOOTH Yes. And there's a terrible, terrible danger in this Western tradition of duality. As long as one thinks of dual dimensions of the same reality, one can think of a creative aim toward a never-quite-achieved synthesis or resolution of the conflict. But if one transforms, by extension or indeed by abstraction, that sense of duality into an abstract dualism, in which you have all the good, let's say, in the spirit, and all the bad in the body, as though man were two parts, rather than an embodied spirit or a spiritual body, or, let us say, all the bad in the Communists and all the good in the Western democracies, then the opportunity and temptation for a kind of crusade of extermination or destruction or absolute repression appears. It's that temptation which has harassed all of Western history. So although I think there is great creativity in the thought of duality, I would also argue that there is great danger in making it metaphysical and talking dualistically about man.

MILLER Well, getting back to the sources of moral values and the kind of society we live in, people are certainly groping for the sources. But not only that. They're trying to get instant wisdom. It seems to be a facet of our society, instant morals, instant breakfast, instant everything else. And the question that always comes up among my students, as well as my own peer groups, is whether there are eternal verities. Are there really certain moral values that are eternal, past and present, for all human beings?

BOOTH There may be, but if there are, their articulation isn't in such a form that they can be helpful to us in concrete situations. Part of the problem of discerning and naming the moral absolutes in such a way that they can be applied to actual situations is that situations are so complex that one gets involved in what is called casuistry. This entails the temptation to rationalize and misuse one's moral principles by selecting out and/or bending the absolutes so that they fit in the way you'd like them to fit and then finding interpretations of their fitting.

Rather than approaching moral evaluation that way, particularly in a time of radical flux in terms of ultimate commitments, we would find it more useful to ask questions of another sort. That is to say, to ask whether or not there are some principles which help us to identify and then to describe and then to weigh those aspects of a situation relevant to moral evaluation. What aspects of a situation must be taken into account in our efforts to come to

our own moral judgments of things? After all, I don't think human beings are being educated simply to reflect an essentially external code or set of values. Moral experience and decision have interior dimensions, and part of the language of ethics is freedom and responsibilities. As such, the relevant question is "Can moral principles be found that will help each person marshal the elements of the situation in which he finds himself, principles that it is necessary for him to take into account as he tries to find his way to a resolution of a moral dilemma which he's willing to risk, to which he's willing to give himself?"

MILLER The answer to that is certainly basic and would be especially valuable to teachers in the classroom situation.

BOOTH Well, as a beginning, I think we have to start broadly, both in our answers for ourselves and in our discussions with students. It seems to me there are at least four areas or groups of ingredients in any situation of human action that need to be taken account of in trying to make action moral, trying to make a moral evaluation of action. Let me divide these four groups into two larger groups, and talk for a little bit about the first two.

The first of the first group I think is quite confessedly individual interest. We are after all concrete bodies. Each one of us as an individual self is the center of his experience. As such my needs are worthy of consideration, not only by me when I take action, but when I insist that other people think about my needs in terms of their actions. I think this is reciprocal: I must think about theirs. The concrete interests of each individual person need to be taken into account – physiological needs, psychological needs, particular kinds of talents that a person has, particular likings and inclinations that a person has. John Dewey used to say that ultimately questions of political and social ethics have to be determined by the people whom they affect. In other words, it's not the shoe-fitter but the person wearing the shoe who has the ultimate right to say, "It doesn't fit, it hurts." And in the same way it seems to me we don't need to be too skittish about admitting that among the ingredients that are required to be taken account of by all of us in making moral evaluations are these profoundly individual, self-centered interests that all of us have.

Now, at the same time, within this same first group, it's also the case that we're not totally individuals. Each of us is interrelated with other individuals. We are all, for our bodily lives and for every other aspect of our lives, inter-

dependent. In this sense we play certain socially useful roles. And in moral evaluation we must therefore take into account what is necessary to a person for that particular role to be well played. In other words, in a moral setting, responsibility imposed upon a person within the structure of society is accompanied by an equivalent amount of power or material capacity. In administration, if you have a certain amount of responsibility, you've got to have a commensurate amount of authority to go along with that responsibility.

So because we are individual beings, among the ingredients that have to be taken into account in moral evaluation are those things which we construe to be in our interests, or serving our interests, or pleasing us. But because we are at the same time social beings, we also have to ask questions about how this kind of behavior will contribute to the role we are counted upon to play in society in order to maintain society in being, to maintain those various functions of society which allows it to help other people be sustained in their being. Now, sometimes these ingredients are very much in tension with another. But they nonetheless have to be considered.

MILLER Would you say, therefore, that society has to be one which considers the needs of the individual?

BOOTH Society is composed of individuals, and in part it has as its business the fulfillment of the needs of the individuals of which it is composed. At the same time, from the other perspective, it is also the case that the individual is a part of society, and that the individual has to sustain his functioning in society in such a way that the society can persevere, stay healthy, stay strong, and continue to enable its various functions. I think it's a mistake to try to ask which came first. It's not helpful to answer the individual, because then society is just a composite of or an aggregate of individuals, which is pure individualism and treats society as sheerly derivative. I think it's equally unhelpful to answer that society is the sole primal reality, in which individuals are simply cogs and therefore expendable in the interests of a smoother functioning of the machinery of the society. These two things, it seems to me, are two aspects of human life. One doesn't have individuals outside societal settings, and certainly one doesn't have a society save it be made up of individuals.

So yes, I would say a society, to be morally termed a functioning society, has to take into account the interests of its members as individuals. Each individual has a right to be heard about his interpretation, his perception, of

his interests. But that does not exclude the concomitant responsibility of each individual to hear society's claims upon the role which it is asking the individual to play in the maintenance and functioning of that society. If the individual has interests, he also has talents and gifts, and if the individual has a right to expect his interests to be served, he also has the obligation to expect that his talents will be used.

MILLER You've mentioned the rights of the individual, but you didn't mention responsibilities. Does the individual have a responsibility to the society? Does the society have responsibilities to the individual?

BOOTH Speaking metaphorically one can speak about society having responsibilities. Speaking actually, I should certainly say that the individual has responsibilities to society, and through society to others.

It's not the case that any of us comes into being alone. Now that's kind of simple-minded, if one thinks biologically. It took the cooperative efforts of at least two people. And not just biologically. It took the cooperative efforts of many people to sustain those two people in terms of food, clothing, and shelter in such a way as to allow them to establish the kind of a family within which they would have a child in the first place.

I'm really now talking very much in the vein of Socrates in *Crito*. When his friends ask to be allowed to bribe the guards so that he can escape from prison, having been unjustly (in a moral sense) but legally condemned to death by the Athenians, Socrates argues that it is not possible, it would not be moral, it would not be consistent, for him to flee, because the laws of Athens, under which he has now been condemned to death, are the same laws under which he came into being in the first place. They allowed the economy to flourish, thereby enabling his parents to feed Socrates so that he could grow. Under the laws of Athens, language was sustained, intercourse among people, a commerce of ideas, within which Socrates came to be a flourishing, mature mind, a self-conscious mind. It was under those laws that enterprises were placed before Socrates on the basis of which he could test himself and determine the limits of his gifts and his courage and his ability to persevere.

So if I have been given my being by the laws, says Socrates, it would be inconsistent of me, now that under those same laws fortune has turned against me, it would be utterly inconsistent of me to say, "I will take only what pleases me from the laws, and then run away from the laws the moment something that displeases me comes to me under those same laws." In that

sense, I would say, yes, individuals do have a responsibility to society precisely because they have become human individuals only in the context of societal relationships and societal institutions.

MILLER There are some who would disagree with you, but perhaps you can answer them.

BOOTH I would insist that every time I emphasize society, I then want immediately to re-emphasize the individual, as Socrates insisted also on his right and responsibility to oppose the conduct of Athenian affairs. I think the way in which those two are held together is subsumed under the category of justice. Justice is the great social virtue precisely because it is the virtue under which we try to understand the relationship between the meeting of individual needs and interests on the one hand and the fulfillment of the responsibilities which society rightfully claims from those individuals on the other.

I'd then go on to say that justice, although the pre-eminent social virtue, is not, I think, the ultimate human virtue – and now I'm moving into the second group and the third and fourth principles. Justice is not the ultimate characteristic of full humanity, what the Greeks called *arete*. It seems to me that to be an individual is not the ultimate way of being human, but rather to be a person is closer to the ultimate way of being human. One of the moral principles that helps us to select out aspects of a situation by which to make a moral evaluation has to do with what I would call responsible freedom. Freedom, because it is an expression of the self, because it is a self-chosen response or initiative, a self-chosen bending of the energies of time and history. Yet responsible, because it is not freedom which is construed in terms of being free from a whole series of restraints perceived to be external, but rather the substitution for external restraints of a sense of interior direction such that we can be free for the enhancement of the world within which we work out our freedom. It is a larger and a more profound sense of freedom to conceive of myself as being free to enact certain kinds of self- and world-modification which in the future benefit myself, the world itself, and, above all, other human beings.

Now, this kind of internalization of what might otherwise be construed as the demands of external society upon me as an individual, producing now within me a sense of responsible freedom, discipline, self-restraint, willingness to run risks, a sense of self-direction in my relationship to others – this inter-

nalization of that just duality of the self as an individual and society as institutional is what, it seems to me, characterizes above all the mature human being. I would use the word "individual" for that first sense, and "person" in the sense of taking full, free responsibility for one's actions in the world, as well as for other people. To be a human being is to be called to become increasingly a person.

In order to make my symmetry complete, I must add – as I added society to the individual – another category of moral principle to the moral principle of the person, namely, community.

In a community, persons interrelate not for extrinsic objectives, not in order that they may be more calculatedly instrumental to the preservations of their bodies or the powers of their state or even the justice of their society or the wealth and health of their schools. They now interact for the intrinsic quality of sharing, enjoying, learning, interpenetrating with one another, a quality whose value is experienced in the very process of the experience, an experience which doesn't look outside itself in time or space to be validated. Conversation, after all, is a far richer experience in human terms than the process, equally important at a different level, of planning together for a successful scientific or business or athletic venture, because at this deeper level the experience contains its own reward and doesn't have to depend upon success or failure in order to be fulfilled.

The goal of the moral enterprise is somehow so to orient the justice of society in its marshaling of individual talent and its meeting of individual needs that personal internalized responsibility and freedom will be enhanced and will express themselves principally in relationships with other freely responsible and responsibly free human beings in the community. Now if justice is the main category under which one can subsume the individual and the societal, I guess I would look to the Greek word *harmonia* to subsume this other dual set of morally relevant ingredients. Or maybe even better, the Hebrew word *shalom*, which means "peace," but not simply in the sense of the absence of strife. It means peace in the sense of prosperity, enrichment, and mutual enrichment. When one says *shalom*, one says "fulfillment," and not just "placidity." What we aim at are a just society and a community which nurtures and enhances *shalom*.

MILLER Harry, I wish you'd talk a bit more about community. I feel it's necessary to clear up this word as you're using it in the context of our dis-

cussion. We talk, in our school, about the school community in relation to Oakland neighborhood communities, for example, "the black community," "the Chicano community," or "the Wasp community." In that use the word implies a degree of vested interest and self-interest in terms of power as a political process. Would you please clarify?

BOOTH Fair enough. I think that words are worth striving for, worth fighting for, if you will, to preserve a continuity of meaning which can be enriched as circumstances change, can take on new connotations, but nevertheless can be used in a tradition which will maintain continuity with our predecessors. Otherwise, we become quite cut off, and words simply become signs or counters, as they are in advertising.

The meaning which you find connotatively most significant in connection with the word "community" – the combative presentation of power in the pursuit of certain communal interests – derives from the circumstance that today, in order to be itself internally (in my sense), the community must tragically present itself to the rest of its society with this combative power front (in your sense). The Irish-American community or the Afro-American community are political power blocks partly because they are trying to preserve the context internally within which they perceive it to be possible for persons who are members of that community to have rich, intense interpersonal relationships in the context of a specific human cultural memory and inheritance. What is it that the people in South Boston say they are trying to preserve, and what is it that Malcolm X said he was preserving within the black community? It would be the capacity to call one another brother, and in some sense to do so within this community which is externally in confrontation with the larger society and with other communities. To the extent to which that's the case, the moral dilemma that we face is how to organize society so that that combative face becomes less necessary in order to allow the creative inner face of this group to continue to express itself.

MILLER There is always the danger of the person, especially the adolescent, losing his identity within a subcommunity. The individual wants to be himself and yet there is tremendous peer pressure for him to belong to "a community."

BOOTH Any individual who tries to play his life out starkly over against the universe is going to be either utterly self-centered and engaged in fantasy and hatred all his life, or utterly swallowed up as a cipher in the largest world.

But in between the individual and the totality, there are a host of buffer groups, as it were, within which the individual learns, forms, reforms, recreates, discovers, and rediscovers himself as a person. This may be in terms of voluntary associational groups, peer groups, or it may be, I think more richly, in terms of a sense of inheriting a series of memories with which he is willing to identify himself and say, "Yes, that is my inheritance, that was my grandfather."

But now the genius of the subcultural group, whether of an ethnic sort or of a voluntaristic sort, is that while it is the locus of self-discovery and self-expression as the self becomes more and more of a person, it in some sense exists to be transcended. It exists in order to be able to obsolesce itself, and to give birth, as it were, to a mature human being who, while he retains his love and reverence and relationships within that group, is no longer exclusively defined by that group or his membership in it. It becomes not obsolescent in the sense that it will be left behind, but transcended in that it is not destined to be in the long run the exclusive milieu in which the person expresses himself.

MILLER To what extent does society impose these self-transcending values upon a community? We can hit right there in terms of integration, which we've been approaching in another way.

BOOTH Society has an obligation to try to insure minimal formal justice for all the individuals who are citizens of that society. Integration is justified within society to the extent to which it can be argued and demonstrated that without it various individuals will not be so armed with self-regard, as well as with certain skills, that they can find their way and make their way in the roles that society rewards. On the other hand, society must also submit itself to the larger moral principle of personhood and community and so try to articulate its processes of insuring social justice, like integration, in such a way that they will in the longer run enhance and not diminish the possibilities of human beings becoming full, freely responsible persons capable of nurturing and being nourished by community-interpenetrating relationships.

MILLER Well, I agree with you, but I hesitate in my agreement in that when we get down to the reality of the community situation, the political urban situation, it sinks into an abyss of hostility on the part of much of the community we're talking about. That's not an issue that can be simply thrown aside by what we consider to be the future greater good.

BOOTH Yes, I understand. How long do you persevere in what is felt, formally speaking, to be just – namely, integration – when, in the actualities of the situation, that integration is producing both greater hostility and greater self-distrust than it is equivalencing or equalizing or armoring talent and capacity?

MILLER Perhaps it's the growing pains of developing a mature nation.

BOOTH The tragedy of it is that it's not integration as a form that has produced the hostility, but the resistance of various groups to integration. That is to say, integration itself as a form probably never had a full chance to display its justice while not deteriorating communal and intercommunal relationships. It may not be integration that is a failure, so much as the moral fiber of those to whom integration was for some reason or another a threat.

It's almost an aesthetic hunch whether or not one is at the point of such diminishing returns that one ought not to be obstinate about integration. One could read two possibilities: First, with certain common standards set by society, let each educate its own within its own ethos, those common standards involving both technical skills – reading, writing, arithmetic, and so on – and citizenship commitments to the common structures of political society, while the personal self-regard is nurtured within the history of the community. One possibility. The second possibility would be to say, no, separate but equal is inherently unequal; only in integrated schools can individuals be fully equipped to enter into an integrated society, and that in itself presupposes some moves within society at large. That might be asking the schools to bear too much. But, if at the same time there were a recrudescence of family, church, other kinds of communal organizations which could continue to nurture, say, the Irish-Americanness of the South Boston Irish-Americans, it could reduce the burden placed on the schools for total acculturation, skill education, and moral education. I think that's a possibility also.

I'd hope we as a nation could be consistent in moving one direction or another. Is it possible to devise a community of communities, a society which intentionally seeks to enhance the inner community possibilities of each of its subgroups while at the same time encouraging intercommunication between these subgroups such that our enrichment is not limited by our own ethnic inheritance, however rich that may be, but is open to the possibilities of a larger sphere of enrichment?

I guess, in terms of our discussion, what's important here is to notice that

in my halting and staggering efforts to comment reasonably on a terribly complicated social-moral problem, I've had recourse to those aspects of the situation which my four principles of moral evaluation have insisted that I not overlook in my search for a resolution which itself cannot be dictated by neat rules but can only be searched for and perhaps slightly grasped under the guidance of the principles. It's a different thing to have a decision dictated by a rule and to have it guided by a principle.

MILLER Perhaps we should consider more directly these guiding principles and their relationship to the responsibility that's now given the public schools. I see three areas here: these guiding principles in relationship to the teacher and his role, to the students and their roles, and then to the curriculum itself.

BOOTH I'd like to take the curriculum first. Ideally, one would not compartmentalize moral education into a course or even a series of courses, let alone a faculty session some afternoon. One would envision a faculty sensitive to the general moral inheritance and the specific moral implications of the disciplines in which they were involved as teachers, no matter what the discipline. Every discipline is itself the product of a tradition, the product of a group of committed scholars and transmitters of that tradition, who themselves were engaged in moral activity in the process of enhancing and criticizing that tradition. And this includes the critique of the social uses of the knowledge refined by each discipline. Now, there are some disciplines, I suppose, which are more adaptable . . .

MILLER Or more consciously aware.

BOOTH . . . or more consciously aware. History is obviously one. I think history can be taught in terms of the moral dilemmas confronted by those who were making for them contemporary and agonizing moral decisions. Which is to say that history becomes history only because it was first a moral problem, implicit if not explicit. The decision becomes a historical decision only after it has been a moral problem. And history I think ought to be taught in such a way as to make that more vivid and more lively. According to the moral principles that I've suggested, or other formulations of them, who are the *dramatis personae* in the piece, who had power, who were the victims of power, what were the issues, the possibilities, the facts, the ambiguities, the risks, the choices, the losses as well as the gains?

MILLER Certainly there are trends in this direction in new materials for history courses at the high school level. The missile crisis, the Korean War,

Hiroshima, Vietnam – all moral crises, and certainly moral dilemmas for the leadership – are quite appropriate to moral evaluation.

BOOTH To go back a few years, the teaching of the American Revolution was done in terms of those fourth-grade word lists we talked about. Now, I gather there are materials which enable people to see the Tory side as a viable or at least arguable moral position rather than simply as a position associated with the tyrants. I think that kind of complexity is very important.

MILLER I think historians have in recent years emphasized the moral dilemmas and the different points of view within a conflict. And certainly the books that deal with the Civil War today are far more revealing in terms of the moral dilemmas and conflicts of both the North and the South.

BOOTH To what extent do the teachers who are using these new materials point out that there's a deep kinship between us and these people wrestling with their problems as we are wrestling with ours – the very fact that we, teachers and students, too, are human beings facing sets of circumstances and having to make the best decision we can in which sometimes we're going to be right and sometimes we're going to be wrong, sometimes we'll have a chance to amend our wrong decisions, other times we won't? It's not that what happened in Athens in the fifth-century Peloponnesian Wars is identical to the decay in Western culture, but that they were human and we are human, and they confronted their problems as moral agents and we confront ours as moral agents.

MILLER Certainly in the humanities courses in my school, the emphasis on moral education is quite pronounced, because in dealing with, say, classical times, Greece and Rome, we not only compare moral values of Greeks and Romans, but relate them to America now. We study the life styles of people of those times, and their psychological and physical needs, in relation to the society they lived in, and then relate it to us.

BOOTH Humanities courses have access in a more direct way than history courses to works of art, for example. Their intentionality is precisely to intensify the aspects of moral tension, action, and suffering, and the possibilities of moral grandeur or rebirth in the course of this suffering, without the abdication of the moral sphere by the hero. In such art works I think one has an even better chance to begin the classroom discourse that begins to illuminate questions of moral evaluation.

Drama is probably the best way, the best vehicle through which this kind of thing can happen, because people seem very real and people speak very

passionately and enter into conflict with one another and discover conflicts within themselves. The resolutions of those conflicts are arrived at in a mixture of satisfactory and unsatisfactory ways, and the persons then emerge more mature and enriched for the experience. Again, as I say, without having abdicated the moral tension, but precisely by enacting and suffering the moral tension.

MILLER The effectiveness of visual art in the classroom is quite revealing. Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, for example, clearly indicates some degrees of stress and decompartmentalization in our society. And the expressionist paintings of Munch certainly reveal the anxiety and concern, and I find this of extreme help.

BOOTH There are a couple of ways in which art is particularly useful here. Partly it's useful illustratively, as you say, as revealing to us in ways that carry with greater (and different) kinds of impact than verbal ways the feel of a particular cultural or psychological setting or the failure of a particular need to be met. In that sense it also enhances our capacity to imagine alternatives, which is part of the moral enterprise, constantly imagining, emphasizing, alternative possibilities.

But there's another sense in which art can be very helpful: art is not only illustrative of other human enterprises; it is itself a human enterprise. The study of selected works of Beethoven in music or of Van Gogh or of Picasso in painting reveals the struggles, which are I think moral struggles, of artists to be consistent with their previous visions and yet to criticize and enhance their visions continually. This is the human struggle to revere a tradition and yet burst out of the confines of that tradition as mere deposit, and therefore to build upon and enhance that tradition as living. All those things are themselves a manifestation of the moral life, in this case, right in the life and work of the artist himself. In both these ways, art is profoundly significant in moral education.

I also think of biography, midway between drama and history. It intensifies certain aspects, as drama does, and is highly personalized, more vivid, and at the same time clearly immediately relatable to history because presumably it's being loyal to history. So I recommend biography — and autobiography — sometimes of the people who failed and sometimes of the people who succeeded.

MILLER Unfortunately we still have so much resistance by teachers to the idea of recognizing and using the many other enriching areas of subject matter

– not so much in the humanities classroom, but in courses with a single-discipline label. It's easy to say that someone should use folk music, for example, or Egyptian hieroglyphics to enhance the understanding of a history unit or an English unit, but it's not always so easy to get the teacher to follow your advice.

But let's move on from the curriculum and the teacher, to the teacher himself. There, I think, we come to a really critical question in this whole conversation. What is the role of the teacher, as you see it, in moral education?

BOOTH I think that role has at least two aspects that we should talk about. One has to do with the level and nature of the response which a teacher makes to the very presence of the student in the classroom, whether that student is being actively participant or whether that student is being silently absorptive or whether that student is being quite passive and not absorptive at all. This response, by the way, can express itself by holding the student up to some fairly high expectations and not simply by sympathizing with certain kinds of difficulties the student may be having. And it's not just the teacher's attitude toward one student, but his attitude toward every other student in the class. In moral education, students learn much from the way others are treated, not just the way they themselves are treated. In this sense, the teacher constitutes a part of the constant environment of the student, in which the student is learning about himself and about the possibilities of human interaction.

Now, there's another aspect of the teacher's role in all this, and that is the sense of himself or herself that the teacher discloses in everything he does, not just in the immediate relationships with the students. The consistency with which the teacher thinks, the consistency with which the teacher articulates the concerns of the discipline, the ability that the teacher manifests not to hide grumpiness but to admit it and try to be resilient, the way in which the teacher is pleased and expresses pleasure when things go well and works and expresses disappointment when things do not go well – the kind of self that the teacher discloses to students. Not just the teacher as model, although the teacher is a role model, but the teacher as exemplifying a form of being human, not for the student to imitate but for the student to come into contact with. It's not only a matter of specifically clarifying the moral principles involved in some discussion of subject matter: it's in the whole demeanor, the whole character, of the teacher that moral education takes place. And that means outside the class as well as inside, in the corridors with other teachers,

wherever else the teacher might meet a student.

MILLER You mentioned standards of expectation, and I think this is extremely important. Some teachers don't draw the line between being compassionate and being maudlin, the compassion of having a true sense of worth of a student as a human being and expecting great things of him as opposed to the "poor child, I don't expect anything" attitude.

BOOTH One of the principles of moral evaluation that I suggested had to do with the interests of the individual becoming a person. Those interests are sometimes latent and not manifest to the individual himself, and it may be the case that a tentative assumption should be made by the teacher that, although this student perceives his interests to be best served by an accommodation to his failure, in a longer run the student's latent and genuine best interests would be served by not allowing the student to accommodate himself to his failure.

Now, is that playing God? Insofar as we are older and in positions of authority and are willy-nilly models and have responsibilities with and for the student, we must play small "g" god, transiently and tentatively. I think there's no escape from that kind of responsibility; it goes with authority, just as authority must go with responsibility. The key, it seems to me, is sensing how to touch the student creatively, to elicit from the student, not just demand of the student, and when to stop. This is the intuitive art of teaching, knowing when and how to be insistent and when and how to let go.

MILLER Again, this is part of the heavy burden that society and the very teaching process lay on the schools, in this case, on the teachers. It's difficult for the layman to realize the amount of energy that's expended each day by a teacher who has five classes of thirty-five students. It becomes overwhelming, and teachers are unable to do a good job of teaching every day with every class. The good ones say, yes, I'm tired, I'm just not going to try so much today, because if I do, I won't do a good job.

BOOTH This suggests in an oblique way another point about moral education and its context in the schools. The structure of the institution within which education takes place has, while not a direct input into the moral education of the student, certainly a heavy indirect influence on the student's perception of how it is that human individuals in our society relate to one another, how much time they have to relate to one another, on what levels of equality and inequality they deal with one another. So the fact that a teacher deals with so many students says something to the student about the values

of our society. I'm not talking about the internal structure and administration of a particular school, but the value which our whole society places upon education and moral nurture in the schools in terms of how much of an investment it's willing to make. All of these things are not lost on students.

MILLER We play a charade. We say that the student needs individualized instruction, which is old hat; all it's saying is that the teacher needs to understand that particular student and be aware of the skills that he needs to develop. Yet while we're saying we need to individualize instruction, we give a teacher thirty-five students to individualize with within a fifty-minute time slot, which is totally impossible. The teacher only has time to help, to guide, maybe two or three students, and that's what I consider to be immoral.

BOOTH Especially so because we're not just dealing with the development of the student's talents and capacities for self-unfoldment, but, in terms of moral education, we're trying to elicit from the student a growing sense of the relationship between his self-unfoldment and the role relationships which he has a responsibility for in the various aspects of the society of which he is a part. This is the internalization of those things I talked about earlier as the ground upon which one can build a sense of personal worth and freedom that can't be shaken by changes at the societal and individual level, and still have energy enough or ability to risk oneself enough to enter into those very mysterious and ultimately creative exchanges to which I gave that difficult term "community."

On the other hand, does that mean that part of the teacher's role as a moral educator is to continue to function and be stimulative and absorptive and sensitive, while at the same time doing whatever is in his power to encourage the school systems and society at large to invest more in that enterprise so that it can be done in a way consistent with the ideals expressed by the society in its rhetoric?

MILLER Certainly I would feel that his responsibility is not only to attempt to do the best job he knows how within a given situation, but to improve that situation, because by improving it he will improve his teaching. It's a commitment the teacher must have, it's a moral commitment. I'm encouraged by the fact that there are so many teachers who feel this way, who have this moral commitment.

BOOTH Not only is it an act moral in itself, but it is an act which the students will perceive as a moral act, and therefore it is an act the perception of which will contribute to the student's moral education.

Well, it seems to me that we have been talking for quite a while now -- and properly so, since our subject is moral education -- as though all things on earth and under the heavens should subject themselves to this single-minded imperial enterprise known as moral education, as though all of society, all of the disciplines, the whole life of the teacher, and the whole sensibilities of the student should all somehow be focused on the nurture of the full humanity of the person in potential community. In a way, that's true, but in another it's not entirely true.

It seems to me that the moral enterprise has some obligations to respect the integrity and provisional autonomy of other aspects of the total human enterprise. It is, after all, one dimension of that enterprise. I've mentioned in some respects the dependence of the teacher in moral education upon intuitions which are fundamentally artistic or aesthetic. I think that moral education has a dependence on science as well; it's not moral for us to proceed nonknowledgeably or ignorantly. Moral education, in its efforts to probe the right thing to do, must take into account what we've been taught by scientific enterprise about the probable consequences of any course of action, not just the immediate consequences, but the ripple effect of these consequences in both time and space.

If we've been taught anything by developments in ecological understanding, it is that apparently small steps may turn out to have vast consequences. And it's not appropriate for us to take apparently small steps which in some small context seem to be the right thing to do without considering the likely consequences in a whole variety of related areas. Science is the provider of power, the uses of which should fall under moral observation, that is true. But it is also the case that moral decision should make sure that it subjects itself to a full understanding of what science can tell us about the probable consequences of any particular action. Moral education is not an empire builder in a world of fancy.

Also, there are, I think, at least two ways that the moral enterprise is dependent upon what is traditionally called religion or faith. It's clear to us now, if not before this conversation, that there are no clear-cut, simple, absolute moral answers to the kinds of problematics that confront actual selves as agents in very complex social and interpersonal settings. Because that's the case, it is also the case that any self-responsible act is going to be one taken at tremendous risk. We can't probe all of our motives to make sure that they're clean or pure or sound; we can't probe all of the consequences of our act,

however dependent we are upon what science or scientists are able to tell us about the probable consequences. How then do we have the courage or the fortitude or the gall, if you will, to engage in this kind of enterprise at all, since it would appear that to engage in a moral act demands that our moral conscience be clean and the relevant consequences of our act be clear, and yet it is precisely those desired elements which are denied us by the situation?

The resource of courage, of trust, to run these risks and to render ourselves morally vulnerable by rendering ourselves morally responsible is a dimension of human life which is properly called religious, or the dimension of faith. Whether or how this is institutionalized, formalized, ritualized, celebrated, argued, or articulated, whether explicit or inchoate and implicit, it is nevertheless, I think, the dimension of faith.

There is one final sense in which ethics or the moral enterprise or moral education as part of the moral enterprise is contingent on religion or faith. If religion constitutes a near ground upon which we are able to run the risks of moral vulnerability, it is also the case that something religious lies at the far end of the moral enterprise. The temptation of the moral enterprise is to become moralistic. The temptation is to impose a set of values as though they were absolute and final, as though the society which could be derived from them would be a utopia to the human beings in it. The temptation to fall from moral inquiry and moral courage into moral absolutism and moralism is ultimately resisted only religiously, I think, because it is resisted only through the process of submission, through the process of – as I indicated earlier in connection with the teacher's calling the student up to his best capacities – the process of saying this far I've been able to take my destiny and the destiny of my relationship to other human beings and the destiny of those who are to some extent within my arena of responsibility, but I must be able to let go. This ability to relinquish that obligation and that sense of moral nurture which has come to assume so profound and so central a role in our understanding of what it means to be human, to give over precisely what is most cherished, what one has felt has been the defining characteristic of one's own life, calls for a religious underpinning.

So I would never argue that moral education is the only education or that the moral enterprise is in any sense utterly autonomous or, worse than that, utterly imperial. It enters into creative relationships with other aspects of human existence, which are not themselves derived from the moral and do not derive their importance from the way in which they can serve the moral.

Bibliographical Note

Ethics in general (and moral education in particular) is a vast and accessible field, already well subject-catalogued. But for teachers wishing to pursue further the kind of approach taken in this conversation, there are certain books that will be especially helpful. First I would put H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Responsible Self* (New York: Harpers, 1963) and two books by John Macmurray: *The Self as Agent* (New York: Harpers, 1957) and *Persons in Relations* (New York: Harpers, 1963).

Two books that originally appeared some years ago but have in no sense lost their usefulness are Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966) and Werner Jaeger's *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939). Another book pursuing this theme of the educative power of our whole culture is Paul Nash's *Models of Man* (New York: Wiley, 1958). Others informing the approach to the material of this conversation are Paul Tillich, *Morality and Beyond* (New York: Harpers, 1963), and Josef Pieper, *Leisure and the Basis of Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1952).

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